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THE REALIZATION OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

THE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION, INCLUDING EDUCATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS

Written statement submitted by the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[25 August 1997]

1. It has been over three and a half years since the General Assembly in December 1994 proclaimed the 10-year period of 1995-2004 the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. However, despite the fact that the Decade is defined as an instrument to make efforts to build a universal culture of human rights all over the world, it seems that such efforts have not yet been sufficient.

2. The year 1998 is said to be the International Year of Human Rights as it is the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the time of the five-year implementation review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993. Therefore, the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) suggests that it become an occasion for the international community, including the United Nations itself, to reaffirm the goals and the focuses set up by the Decade. In order to illustrate the kind of efforts to be made to meet the goals of the Decade, IMADR would like to describe relevant activities carried out in Japan.

3. In Japan, NGOs such as the IMADR-Japan Committee (JC), the Buraku Liberation League (BLL), the National Dowa Educators' Organization and the Japan Teachers' Union have actively approached both national and local governments to establish a basis to promote the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. In December 1995, as a result of such efforts, the national Government established a Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights Education, chaired by the Prime Minister with the involvement of the administrative vice-ministers from 22 related national ministries and agencies. The Centre released a National Plan of Action on 4 July 1997. The Plan calls for the promotion of human rights education at all possible stages such as school and social education and education at workplaces and in other forms of association as well as for those who are involved in specific occupations. The Plan also suggests that the Japanese Government should engage in important issues such as the rights of women, children, elderly people, people with disabilities, Buraku people, the Ainu people, foreigners in Japan, people with HIV and those who have been released from prison at the end of their term of imprisonment. Furthermore, the Plan states that Japan should take an active role in international cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

4. In addition, as already seen in a number of prefectures (e.g. Osaka, Mie and Fukuoka), efforts to establish centres for the promotion of human rights education have been made at the local government levels. IMADR hopes that such involvement by local governments will be expanded throughout the country.

5. Having recognized a good example in Japan, IMADR would like to call upon other States to establish Centres for the Promotion of Human Rights Education in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations and other private organizations, not only at the international and national levels, but also at the local level.

6. For the twenty-first century to be the one for the culture of human rights, the universal idea of human rights expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should take root among various cultures in the world. Such diverse cultures, in turn, should guarantee various values of human rights. In order to guarantee such enrichment of human rights, grass-roots organizations and local governments from different parts of the world should have an international dialogue to exchange their experiences and opinions with regard to human rights in their communities to implement human rights education on the global scale. For this reason, IMADR would like to propose that an international conference on human rights education be held in 1998. We, IMADR, have begun approaching both national and local governments of Japan to host such an international conference in Japan. It would be the most ideal if the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights also could support holding such an important conference.

7. It is also requested that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights collect information on efforts to promote the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education on a regular basis and distribute such information to Governments and NGOs.